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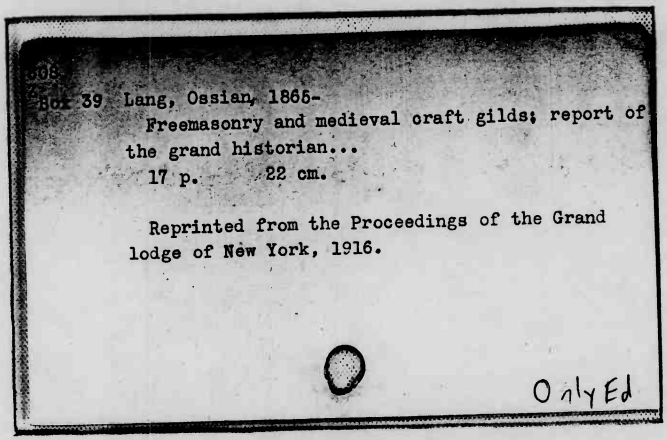
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FREEMASONRY AND MEDIEVAL CRAFT GILDS

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REPORT

of the

Grand Historian

R.·.W.·. Ossian Lang

[Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York, 1916]

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AND
MEDIEVAL CRAFT GILDS

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REPORT OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN.

R.·. W.·. OSSIAN LANG, Grand Historian, presented the following report, which was received and ordered printed in the Proceedings:

To the Grand Lodge:—

WAS FREEMASONRY DERIVED FROM THE MEDIEVAL CRAFT GILDS OF MASONS?

Last year, the Grand Lodge voted, on motion of M.·. W.·. BRO. TOWNSEND SCUDDER, that the Grand Historian be requested to present, at this Annual Communication, a report on the origin of Freemasonry, more particularly its derivation, if such can be proved, from the medieval gilds of operative Masons.

Considering that comprehensive and scientifically conducted researches of a long list of reliable historians have failed to establish any clearly demonstrable derivations of Freemasonry, as we know it, from the old craft gilds, your Historian had reason to feel quite overwhelmed by the expression of confidence implied in the request of the Grand Lodge. The first thing he did was to post up in his study a card bearing in conspicuous letters the legend, "*It can be done*," and then set to work resolutely to do the impossible, if need be, to meet your wishes. A summary of a year's patient toil is herewith submitted to your fraternal consideration.

PREAMBLE.

When speaking of Freemasonry, we must take into account a trinity of elements: Form, Substance, and Spirit. Or, to mark the dividing lines more distinctly: Constitutions, Ritual, and Teachings.

In attempting to trace the history of our Fraternity, it would be necessary, therefore, to account for the origins of these elements.

I believe you need no argument from me to convince you that a really satisfactory history cannot be published without doing violence to our Masonic obligations, except for the exclusive instruction of lawful Master Masons. Yet, if we could demonstrate that the premier Grand Lodge represented merely the revival of something that had had a continuous existence before, the task would be comparatively simple. Such, however, is not the case. At any rate, there is no proof for it. The "Constitutions" were derived from one source and then remodeled to meet new requirements; degrees and other ritualistic forms and usages were elaborated on the basis of borrowings from several sources; the teachings were organized more or less independently of any pre-existing body of instruction; the spirit is a growth from beginnings which may be traced with some degree of clearness to societies quite different from those which contributed constitutions, suggestions for initiatory ceremonies and fundamental teachings.

The limitations which the Grand Lodge has set for the object of the present report, restrict our researches to contributions derived from whatever connections we may be able to trace between our Fraternity and medieval craft gilds of operative Masons.

In order to mark clearly our point of departure, we shall now have to review briefly the establishment of the Grand Lodge of England, between the years of 1717 and 1723.

Beginnings of the Premier Grand Lodge.

Shortly after the accession of George I to the throne of Great Britain, a number of "accepted Free-Masons," of whom we shall speak more fully by and by, resolved to form a center of union. Accordingly, a preliminary meeting was held, in February, 1717, at the Apple Tree Tavern, in London, which was attended by representatives of four "drooping Lodges," together with "some old Brothers." After having put into the Chair the oldest Master Mason (then Master of a Lodge), "they constituted themselves a Grand Lodge *pro tempore* in Due Form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the Officers of Lodges (called the Grand Lodge), resolved to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast, and then to chuse a Grand Master from among themselves, till they should have the Honour of a Noble Brother at their Head."

The first "Annual Assembly and Feast" of this provisional Grand Lodge was held four months later, on John Baptist day, June 24, 1717, at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house, in St. Paul's Church-Yard. Before sitting down to dinner, Mr. Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, was elected Grand Master and duly installed.

The significance of this simple recital of events consists in the information that a Grand Lodge was formed to be composed of Masters and Wardens of "regular Lodges" which were approved by the Grand Lodge, or to be established "by authority of a warrant from the Grand Master for the time being, granted on petition." Whatever connection, if any, may have existed theretofore between the Lodges composing this first Grand Lodge of accepted Free-Masons and any former organization or organizations of Craft Masons or others, was now definitely ended. In fact, Lodges claiming to be Masonic, which were not operating under the authority of this Grand Lodge, were considered clandestine and not worthy of consideration. Further confirmation of the conclusion that a new Fraternity had arisen, is supplied in the subsequent tacit admission by newly formed Lodges and Grand Lodges that the Grand Lodge at London must be accepted as the supreme authority in all matters concerning Accepted Free-Masons. In short, the formation of that Grand Lodge marked the beginning of Freemasonry, as we know it and as we practice it to-day.

Nothing of any moment appears to have transpired between the Annual Assembly of 1717 and that of 1718, except perhaps the probable admission to membership of George Payne, Esquire, who became Grand Master on June 24, 1718. Soon after this, the young, or, if you prefer to call it so, the rejuvenated, Fraternity made a notable accession in John Theophilus Desaguliers, who became identified with one of the existing Lodges, was promptly made Master of his Lodge, and at the following Annual Assembly, on June 24, 1719, was elected Grand Master.

Desaguliers was just the man needed to place Freemasonry, as represented by the Grand Lodge, on a solid foundation of serious purposes and to make it a power for good in the world. A significant sidelight on the predominantly convivial character of the Fraternity is afforded in the record that at the feast following the installation of Desaguliers as Grand Master "the custom of drinking healths" was revived.

Desaguliers was thirty-six years old when he became Grand Master. He was the son of a French Huguenot clergyman, who had been forced to leave his native country, on the revocation of the edict of Nantes, in 1685, and had found refuge and a parsonage in London, the haven for thousands of exiled Protestants from all parts of the European continent. John Theophilus proceeded to Oxford, after the death of his father, where he came under the influence of the great Newton, who took special interest in him. After taking his academic degrees, entering on deacon's orders, and occupying a chair of experimental philosophy, he was, in 1714, elected a fellow of the famous Royal Society and invited to become demonstrator and curator of that exclusive body of promoters of the natural sciences. Sir Isaac Newton, who held him in high esteem, was then president of the Royal Society. In the same year Desaguliers became chaplain to the Duke of Chandon. King George I, who listened to one of his sermons, was so greatly impressed that he commanded him to deliver courses of lectures at court. Desaguliers retained this royal favor through the reign of George I and continued his lectures to the royal household, under George II, presumably until he died, in 1744.

We cannot, at this time, enter more fully into the biography of this interesting character. The data I have selected are of peculiar significance for our present purpose. Desaguliers' prominence in the Royal Society was to be of considerable importance for the development of the purposes of the Grand Lodge. If we were to consider the growth of the Fraternity, from 1719 to the end of the eighteenth century, we should find that many famous men were drawn into Freemasonry through the influence, directly or indirectly, of Desaguliers. Last year it was my privilege to show you how this influence brought Frederick the Great into the Fraternity. We might show how Desaguliers' invention of military machinery and the prominence of one of his sons in the Royal Artillery undoubtedly account for the multiplication of military Lodges. All these facts, interesting as they are, are rather outside of the scope of our present discussion.

The thing that gave particular satisfaction to the Brethren of the Grand Lodge, was Desaguliers' relations with royalty. The Brethren had set their hearts on capturing "the Honour of a Noble Brother at their Head." Desaguliers was the man to get them the "Honour." Their ambitions were satisfied when, in 1721, "John, Duke of Montagu, Master of a Lodge," was elected Grand Master.

After his election, the Duke "commanded Desaguliers and James Anderson, A. M., men of genius and education, to revise, arrange and digest the Gothic Constitutions, old charges and general regulations." The task was completed and the manuscript submitted to the Grand Lodge on John Evangelist day, in 1721. "A committee of fourteen learned Brothers was appointed to examine the manuscript." This committee, after making "some amendments," recommended approval, in

1722. The work was adopted and ordered to be printed, and was published in 1723.

Let us keep in mind that the history which formed the preface to the "Constitutions" was written by DESAGULIERS and ANDERSON, that "a committee of fourteen learned Brothers" made "some amendments," and that the final product was approved by the Grand Lodge. Mackey and others have tried to discredit this history as a collection of fables, not worthy of serious consideration. Our attitude, I believe, should be rather one of respect and reverence, seeking to appreciate and understand the character of that most carefully prepared document.

It ought to be quite reasonable for a Mason to conclude that the Grand Lodge never intended that the outside world should be carefully instructed in plain language concerning the origins of Freemasonry, when all teaching in carefully tiled Lodges is veiled in allegory and conveyed by symbols more or less difficult to interpret properly. At the same time, I do not mean to have you infer that thoughtful non-Masons could not possibly hit upon a right reading of the "history." A fine example of how the analytic mind of a scholarly non-Mason may discern the truth, may be found in the excellent article on Freemasonry, contained in the "Catholic Encyclopedia." The author of that article comes nearer interpreting the "history" correctly, in my estimation, than any Masonic writer whose publications have appeared in the English language, so far at least as these have come to my notice.

The title of the "Constitutions" tells plainly enough that the history of the "Right Worshipful Fraternity of Accepted Free-Masons" was "collected from their general Records, and their faithful Traditions of many Ages." Traditions are interwoven with authentic history. Furthermore, ANDERSON states expressly, in his preface to the "Constitution" of 1738, that "Only an expert Brother, by the true light, can readily find many useful hints in almost every page of this book, which COWANS and others not initiated (*also among Masons*) cannot discern."

As in my studies for the objects of this report I chose deliberately to be guided by hints dug out of the "Constitutions," published in 1723, I am naturally desirous of having you share with me the high estimate I place upon that venerable document.

A KEY TO THE HISTORY OF ORIGINS.

A most important suggestion, the one which I regard as the principal key to the real history of the Fraternity, is tucked away between the pages given to Songs, in the appendix to the book of Constitutions. It is printed after the "Warden's Song," as if intended only to fill an open space:

"To fill up this Page, it is thought not amiss to insert here a Paragraph from an old Record of *Masons, viz., The Company of Masons, being otherwise termed* Free Masons, *of Ancient Standing and good Reckoning, by means of affable and kind Meetings diverse Tymes, and as a* loving Brotherhood *should use to doe, did frequent this* mutual Assembly *in the Tyme of King* Henry IV. the 12*th Year of his most gracious Reign.* And the said Record describing a *Coat of Arms*, much the same with That of the *London Company* of *Freemen* Masons, it is generally believed that the said *Company* is descended of the ancient *Fraternity;*

and that in former Times no Man was made free of that *Company* until he was install'd in some *Lodge* of *Free* and *Accepted Masons*, as a necessary Qualification. But that laudable Practise seems to have been long in Dissuetude.

"The Brethren in foreign Parts have also discover'd that several noble and ancient *Societies* and *Orders* of Men have derived their *Charges* and *Regulations* from the *Free-Masons* (which are now the most ancient *Order* upon Earth), and perhaps were originally all Members too of the said ancient and worshipful *Fraternity*. But this will more fully appear in due Time."

In order to bring out more clearly that here we have two distinct propositions, I have broken the "Paragraph" in two.

I regard proposition number two as the key to the real (though possibly adopted) ancestry of the Masonic fellowship represented by the premier Grand Lodge. A plain discussion of this suggestion could be presented only in tiled meetings of Master Masons willing and prepared to follow the thread of inner history through the mazes of the past, beginning with the opening of the Christian era. I doubt if the subject could be covered in less than twelve study periods. However, this whole matter is not within the scope of the present report.

We must content ourselves here with a more or less summary consideration of the line of investigation suggested in proposition number one.

The "old Record of Masons," which is referred to in the space-filler, I have been able to trace to a second edition of Stow's famous "Survey of London," published in 1633, ten years after the first "inlarged" edition appeared in print and twenty-eight years after the death of the author of the original work. The edition of 1633 contains several matters of special interest to Masons. We are told on the title page that the "Survey" is "now completely finished by the study and labours of A. M. H. D. and others, this present yeere 1633."

In one section of the book are printed coats-of-arms of London Livery Companies, with brief explanatory notes. After the twelve principal Companies, headed by the Mercers, who became a Company in 1393, follow the minor Companies, in order of sequence, the Masons being number 30. Regarding the latter, we are given this information:

"The Company of *Masons*, being otherwise termed Free-Masons, of ancient standing and good reckoning, have be meanes of affable and kind meetings divers times, and as a loving Brotherhood should use to doe, did frequent this mutual assembly in the time of King *Henry* the fourth, in the twelfth yeere of his most gracious Reigne."

There we have word for word the story told in the space-filler between the "Songs" of the Constitutions of 1723. We are informed, then, that the Free-Masons met as a "loving Brotherhood," in 1410, and that they were identified with the London Company of Masons.

If we now consult the rare and monumental "History and Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, Being an improvement of Mr. Stow's and other Historic Writers, By R. Seymour, Esq., and J. Marchant, Gent.," published in 1754, and, therefore, written with a full knowledge of the Grand Lodge of England, then thirty-seven years old, we obtain further light:

"This Company (of Masons) were incorporated about the year 1410,

having been called the Free Masons, a Fraternity of great Account, who have been honour'd by several Kings and very many of the Nobility and Gentry, being of this Society."

The Arms of this Society were "granted by William Hanckeslow, Clarencieux, King of Arms," in 1472, during the reign of Edward IV. We are told further that the Masons of the Company were "once called Freemasons, but that denomination appears now to belong to another Fraternity." This was written, you see, in 1754.

Connections with the Masons' Company of London.

We have now a fairly clear indication that the forebears of the "Accepted Free-Masons" who formed the Grand Lodge of England, were connected in some way with the London Company of Masons. The records of that Company, therefore, ought to supply further information regarding antecedents. I have consulted, with this thought in mind, Conder's "Records of the Hole Crafts," the Parliamentary Reports on the Livery Companies of London, and many other supplementary sources.

Conder was the Master of the Masons' Company in 1894. While we may not be able to follow him in his personal conclusions, we must accept his gleanings from the original records. He was the first to bring to light that there existed in that Company "a dual condition," as early as 1620 "and inferentially in the earliest times." He speaks of a "curious secret brotherhood" within the bosom of the Company. Traditions are preserved, we are told, of an old "fellowship which undoubtedly existed in Britain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."

The ancient records of the Company were consumed in the great fire which devastated London, with the exception of an old account book, which furnished the material for several important discoveries. Conder writes:

"As early as 1620, or twenty-one years before any mention of the Society (of Accepted Masons) is made by any writers of the seventeenth century, we find in the first year entered in the account book, which is the earliest document concerning the Guild that remains in the Company's possession, an entry referring to certain gratuities received from new members in consequence of their having been *accepted* on the livery."

In 1621 occur entries of certain payments, made by these new members, when they were *made* Masons, "doubtless by some ancient ceremony."

In 1631 there appears this notice concerning "accepted" members:

"Paid in going abroad and at meeting at the hall about the Masons that were to be accepted—6/6."

Entry in 1650: "Item received of Thomas Moore, Junior, in full of his fine for coming on the Livery and admission *upon* acceptance of Masonry, £4."

£4 appears to have been the regular admission fee. "Coming on the Livery" was prerequisite, it seems, to "acceptance." The "Accepted" Masons formed a separate division or divisions, meeting as a Lodge or Lodges.

Entry in 1665: Master orders inventory taken of goods and documents belonging to the Company; from this inventory it appears that there was hanging in the Hall a list of *Accepted Masons*, enclosed in a "faire frame, with a lock and key."

Further clues concerning these mysterious "Accepted Masons" are few. The earliest found, so far as I am informed, is that supplied by entries made by Elias Ashmole (1617 to 1692), in his published diary. There we read, under date of October, 1646: "4:30 p.m. I was made a Freemason at Warrington, in Lancashire, with Colonel Henry Mainwaring, of Karineham, in Cheshire." Other names mentioned are all of men who were *not* operatives.

Ashmole mentions the Freemasons again when referring to the historical meeting of a Lodge, held at Masons' Hall, Basinghall Street, London (the Hall of the Masons' Company), on March 11, 1682. He records that the Master, his Warden and several members of the Company were present on that occasion, and adds: "We all dyned at the Half Moon Tavern in Cheapside, at the charge of the New Accepted Masons."

Ashmole is often spoken of as a Rosicrucian. He appears to have been a seeker after curiosities, studied physics and mathematics with predilection, went to London in 1646, where he mixed much in astrological circles and cultivated particularly the acquaintance of Lilly and Booker. A further hint as to his connections is found in his having been a guest at "the mathematical feast at the White Hart."

Following Conder's statement, that there was "doubtless an ancient ceremony" attending "making" of Masons, we may next quote from a manuscript note by Randle Holme, the genealogist, written between 1640 and 1650, what appears to have been part of the oath on admission to the fellowship:

"There is several words and signs of a free Mason to be revealed to you which as you will answer before God at the great and terrible day of Judgment, you keep secret and not reveal the same to any in the hearing of any person whatsoever, but to the Masters and fellows of the said society of free Masons. So help me God."

The Bodleian Library, Oxford, has a MS. of 1686, in which there is a notation in John Aubrey's handwriting, as follows:

"1691, May 18.—This day a great convention at St. Paul's Church of the fraternity of the Accepted Masons ("free" crossed out by Aubrey, and "accepted" substituted by him); where Sir Christopher Wren is to be adopted a Brother; and Sir Henry Goodric * of the Tower and divers others. There have been Kings that have been of this sodality."

Aubrey was an antiquary, who had been made a fellow of the Royal Society, in May, 1663. Among his friends were Sir William Petty, political economist and inventor; Hobbes, the philosopher; and Ashmole. He composed, by order of King Charles II, an unpublished discourse on Stonehenge and other ancient stone monuments which he regarded as derived from the Druids.

I shall quote just one more record before gathering up a few threads

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* Sir Henry Goodricke (1642-1705) was a distinguished diplomatist and was a member of Parliament, in 1673 and 1678-1679.

on our return to the Masons' Company. Plot's "History of Staffordshire" is too important to be passed by. It was published in 1686. In it we read:

"Among the customs of Staffordshire is one to admit men into the Society of Freemasons, which membership is more sought after here than anywhere else, though the custom extends more or less over the whole nation. Persons of the most eminent quality do not despise to belong to this fellowship."

Robert Plot goes on to relate that these Freemasons have "a large parchment volum . . . containing History and Rules of the craft of masonry." He then gives substantially the account contained in the "historic" preface to the Constitutions of 1722-3, so far as England is concerned.

He describes the mode of admission. "A meeting or Lodg as they term it in some places" is called, composed of at least five "Ancients of the Order" who are presented with gloves, also for their wives. After a collation, "they proceed to the admission," which consists chiefly in the communication of "certain secret signes" whereby they know one another all over the nation, "by which means they have maintenance whither ever they travel; for if any man appear, though altogether unknown, that can shew any of these signes to a *Fellow* of the Society, whom they otherwise call an *accepted* Mason, he is obliged presently to come to him, from whatever company or place soever he be."

This would seem to be quotation sufficient for our purpose. Let us now formulate a few conclusions.

Lodges of *accepted* Masons were to be found outside of London, as well as in the bosom of the London Company, during the seventeenth century. Admission was accompanied by a short ceremony consisting of an oath of fealty and the communication of "certain signs" of recognition. It appears, further, that the "Constitutions" were read to the initiates. These Constitutions contained what purported to be the "History and Rules of the Craft of Masonry." The "History" was essentially the information contained in the later Grand Lodge Constitutions of 1722-3, at least so far as the portion relating to Britain is concerned. Many of the men admitted to membership in the secret brotherhood were particularly interested in the pursuit of the sciences and the study of history and archæology, the names of some of these men appearing later on the register of the Royal Society. A sort of connection between the Lodges of these "*accepted*" Masons and the gild of operative Masons is demonstrable in London. A "dual condition" existed in the London Company of Masons, the members of the Lodge or Lodges of "accepted" Masons there forming a distinct body. The Lodges of "accepted" Masons appear to have no continuous existence, their history representing rather a series of sporadic revivals of "an old order." The final "revival" resulted in the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, from which year onward we have a continuous, clear and historic development of Freemasonry.

As the Grand Lodge was formed by representatives of Lodges which appear to have been sheltered, before 1700, by the London Company of Masons, we shall have to inquire somewhat further into the history of that Company.

Of Gilds in General.

First, a word about gilds in general:

When and how craft gilds—or any sort of gilds, for that matter—came into existence, is one of the many unsolved questions of history antedating the invention of the printing press. At one time it was quite generally believed that they represented an Anglo-Saxon continuation, analogy, or adaptation of the Roman colleges or solidarities of artificers. Since the publication of Hallam's "Middle Ages," this guess has been abandoned, and the gild is now looked upon as of Anglo-Saxon origin.*

In Saxon times, they were associations of neighbors or townspeople, devoted more or less to religious and charitable purposes and formed a sort of artificial family, whose members were bound together by the bond, not of kinship, but of an oath.† They assembled for common worship and feasting and served often also as benefit societies and burial clubs. They acted in many cases as private tribunals. Women were equally with men eligible to membership. An oath of obedience to the gild ordinances was administered to each member as he or she joined. Gild day was the day of the saint to whom the gild was dedicated, and formed the occasion for the annual feast.

Gross, in an article on gilds, in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," gives this summary description, based upon a study of the oldest ordinances: "Prayers for the dead, attendance at funerals of gildsmen, periodical banquets, the solemn entrance oath, fines for neglect of duty and for improper conduct, contributions to a common purse, united assistance in distress, periodical meetings in the gild hall—in short, all the characteristic features of the later gilds already appear in these Anglo-Saxon fraternities."

The Norman Conquest marked a new era for the fraternities, as it did for all England. The "Constitutions" of 1723, which indicate to those who have "the Key of Fellowcraft" very clearly the evolution of Freemasonry, record that "as soon as the Wars ended and Peace was proclaim'd, the *Gothic* Masonry was encourag'd, even in the Reign of the Conqueror."

Under Norman rule, the gilds were recognized officially as established institutions and were invested with important privileges. Only those who were members of some gild or "mistery" were allowed to take part in municipal government. Gilds were in many cases the chief or sole medium for acquiring citizenship in a town.‡ As a result there was a rapid multiplication of gilds.

Life in a medieval town made membership in a local gild or fraternity quite desirable. The merchant gilds and craft gilds gradually rose in importance. Men naturally chose membership in the particular

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* The first gilds were distinctly Christian and essentially democratic institutions. To judge from the Carolingian capitularies of 779 and 789, in which the earliest mention is made of gilds, they appear to have been regarded as dangerous to the State. After the Conquest, they formed the basis of the corporations which the Norman Kings recognized as established.

† Gibbins, "Industry of England."

‡ Ashley, "Economic History of England."

organization in which they made their living or which corresponded most satisfactorily to their personal interests.

The craft gilds were composed chiefly, though never exclusively, of handicraftsmen or artisans. Aside from fostering more or less mutual protection and advancement, they undertook the regulation of wages and apprenticeship, and the schooling of their members in the technique of their craft or "mistery." Some of them became veritable seminaries of technical education.

In the course of time, conflicts arose between the master artisans and workmen. The former ruled the gild. The journeymen or yeomen struggling for independence began to set up separate fraternities in defense of their rights, but these soon disappeared again, or fell under the supervision and control of the masters' gilds.

At London, in 1375, the right to election to civic dignities, together with that of electing members of Parliament, was transferred from the Wards to the City Companies. "Thence forward, and for many years, the Companies engrossed political and municipal power in London." *

A further increase of the importance of the Companies resulted when these obtained charters from the Crown. The charter from the King or Queen gave to the Company a virtual monopoly of the trade it represented. "No one was allowed to carry on any particular trade unless he was a member of the Company. . . . The quality of his goods must satisfy the requirements of the Court of the Company. . . . The Courts (of the Companies) also appointed some of their fraternity to examine the work of their members and to see that no one carried on his trade upon Sundays or Saints' Days." †

In Ditchfield's "London Survivals," we read that "the highest personages in Church and State were eager to be enrolled as members," the reason being that the Companies enjoyed valuable municipal privileges and played a prominent part in the social life of the city.

Many of the Companies had their own stately halls and have them to this day. "These halls are the homes of ancient usage and customs which have lingered on through the ages and seem to defy changes wrought by utilitarianism and the modern spirit of the age."

The London Fellowship of Masons.

How did the gild of Masons fare? We find that, in 1356, rules for the guidance of the Masons of London were passed before the Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs of the city. The Masons' Fellowship, it appears from this record, was a Company "by prescription" and had its ordinances and by-laws passed and sanctioned, from time to time, by the Court of Aldermen.

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* Gross, in Ency. Brit., 11th edition: In or about 1475, corporate franchise, which had belonged to the Companies, was restricted to the liverymen of these Companies, representing "selection of a superior class of householders to represent the rest." The order issued by Edward IV, in that year, was that the Masters and Wardens should "associate with themselves the honest men of their misteries and come in their best liveries to the elections." The exclusive power of electing the lord mayor, sheriffs, chamberlain and other corporate officers, is held to this day by the liverymen of the Companies, "being freemen of the city."

† Ditchfield, "London Survivals."

That the Masons' Company, first known as Fellowship of Masons, existed at that time, is proved by the records at Guildhall, which show that it was represented on the Court of Common Council, in 1375.

In 1530, the name of the Fellowship was changed to the Company of Freemasons. This, so Conder reminds us, was about the time "when Masons' fraternities connected with religious houses fell into a state of collapse." The title, "Freemasons," continued down to 1653, when the designation "free" was dropped from the title of the Company.

Perhaps we ought to add a few additional items of information concerning the Company to round out our references to that organization. I have gathered these chiefly from Parliamentary Reports, particularly those of 1884:

The tendency of centralization of political government, which gradually weaned the gilds away from the authority of the town government and brought them under the rule of the crown, is shown also in the history of the Masons' Company. In 1472, a coat-of-arms was granted to the "Craft and Fellowship of Masons." * The earliest royal charter now in the possession of the Company, was obtained from Charles II, in 1677, on "petition by the Master, Wardens and Assistants of the Company of Masons in London." A new charter was granted by James II, after "the Master, Wardens, Assistants and commonality of the Company had surrendered all their powers." The former charter by Charles II, after being "inspected and approved by Queen Anne," was reissued, following a recital that "by an Act of the fifth year of Queen Elizabeth, the art or occupation of a Mason is reckoned as a distinct art or occupation, and that all persons exercising the said art were enabled and might be compelled to take apprentices to be instructed in the occupation."

Members consist of freemen and liverymen. An applicant must be "a male of full age and a subject of the crown." He may qualify either by *patrimony* (if at the time of the applicant's birth his father was free of the Company), by *servitude* (serving an apprenticeship of seven years to a member of the Company), or by *redemption* (by purchase). Membership may also be conferred as an honor. The governing body, composed of the Masters, Wardens, and Court of Assistants, has been for centuries the "admitting" authority; in other words, it controls the "calling" to the livery. The liverymen represent a small, select body, who pay an admission fee of £15 ($75.00). Women are not admitted to membership, although eligible in most gilds; the Tylers and Bricklayers' Company, for instance, in which women can become members and are admitted to the freedom.

The annual election of officers takes place on St. Basil Day, June 14.

The membership consists principally of architects, engineers, surveyors, builders, masons, and stone masons, but the Company has always had also a considerable number of members *not* connected with any department of the building trade.

It is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon gilds that persons not identified

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* A copy of this oldest document now in existence is printed in Conder's book.

with any trade, might and did obtain membership in them.* Almost every craft gild had "gentlemen" among its members. "Gentlemen Masons" is a designation met with quite frequently.

Brotherhood of Accepted Freemasons.

How can we now account for the existence down to the close of the seventeenth century, within the bosom of the Masons' Company, of a Lodge or Lodges of "accepted" Masons, all members of the Company and given to literary, scientific, archeological and other pursuits apparently in nowise related to operative Masonry?

Other trade corporations had "gentlemen members," too, but nothing like this. The oft-repeated statement that the non-operative element formed a separate club, just because it was not interested in mere trade regulations and shop talk, explains nothing. The twelve principal livery companies of London would by reason of their prominence and power have seemed to be far more attractive to the gentlemen and scholars, who joined the Masons' Company, which is number 30 among the *minor* companies. Why did they not join the Merchant Tailors' Company, for instance, which did much for the advancement of education? Why did they join the Masons?

A sort of answer may be derived from Conder's "Records of the Hole Craft and Fellowship of Masons," where we read that the Masons' Company, of London, preserved "the ancient traditions of the Guild when the monastic guilds fell into chaos." The archaic character of these traditions undoubtedly had much interest for antiquarians and the searcher after curious things. However, that is a mere surface view of conditions.

The search for the beginning of the "curious secret brotherhood" yields equally unsatisfactory results, as far as explanation of its connection with Craft Masonry is concerned. There are indications, rather vague, that it existed during the reign of Henry IV (1399-1413), and that it experienced a revival, some years after the monastic gilds had collapsed—my own guess is that it was in 1570 or thereabout. After a brief period of intermittent activity, it appears in Masons' Hall, in 1620, as Conder noted. Another "revival" occurred soon after 1653. The "symbolic" portion left the Company for good, soon after Ashmole's visit in 1682. Next we have the final "revival" in the formation of the Grand Lodge of Accepted Free-Masons.

Searching the "Constitutions" of 1723 for significant clues, we shall find, for a starter, the following record:

"Now though in the third Year of the said King *Henry* IV while an Infant of about four Years old, the Parliament made an Act that affected only the *working Masons*, who had contrary to the Statutes for Labourers, confederated not to work but at their own Price and Wages; and because such agreements were suppos'd to be made at the *General Lodges*, call'd in the Act CHAPTERS and CONGREGATIONS of MASONS, it was then thought expedient to level the said Act against the said *Congregations*. . . . Nor is there any Instance of executing the Act

* Continental craft gilds were more distinctly and exclusively associations of members of trades.

in that, or in any other Reign since, and the Masons never neglected their *Lodges* for it, nor ever thought it worth while to employ their *noble* and *eminent Brethren* to have it repeal'd; because the working Masons, that are free of the Lodge, scorn to be guilty of such Combinations; and the other Free Masons have no Concern in Trespasses against the Statutes for Labourers."

The closing part of the latter sentence tells, as plainly as anything can be told, that brethren of the Lodges, which constitute the "curious secret brotherhood," within the bosom of the craft corporation, had "no concern with trespasses against the statutes for laborers." This disposes of the oft-repeated fallacy which would have us derive Freemasonry from operative masonry. The book of Constitutions is quite insistent on this point, as for instance in a footnote, where we read:

"Many in all Ages have been more curious and careful about the Laws, Forms and Usages of their respective Societies, than about the Arts and Sciences thereof. But neither what was convey'd, nor the Manner how, can be communicated by writing; as no Man indeed can understand it without the Key of a Fellow Craft."

In other words: Whatever suggestions of craft origins you may find in the "Laws, Forms and Usages," they explain nothing of the true derivation which must be looked for rather in "the Arts and Sciences," that is in the secret teachings of the fraternity. "Without the Key" of a fellow or initiated associate member of the operative body, "no Man indeed" can understand this.*

The Act of 1425 seems to have troubled the members of the Grand Lodge of 1717-1723 more than they were willing to admit. They printed it in full in the historical preface, added a lengthy footnote to their comments on it, and tucked away a space-filling "Postscript" between the "Charges" and the "General Regulations," an "Opinion of the Great Judge Coke upon the Act against the Masons." The footnote is particularly interesting. It reads as follows:

"That Act was made in ignorant Times, when true Learning was a Crime, and Geometry condem'd for Conjuration; but it cannot derogate in the least Degree from the Honour of the ancient Fraternity, who to be sure would never encourage any such Confederacy of their working Brethren. But by Tradition it is believ'd, that the Parliament-Men were then too much influenc'd by the illiterate Clergy, who were not accepted Masons, nor understood Architecture (as the Clergy of some former Ages) and generally thought unworthy of this Brotherhood; yet thinking they had indefeasible Right to know all Secrets, by virtue of auricular Confession, and the Masons never confessing anything thereof, the said Clergy were highly offended, and at first suspecting them of Wickedness, represented them as dangerous to the State during that Minority, and soon influenc'd the Parliament-Men to lay hold of such supposed Agreements of the working Masons, for making an Act that might seem to reflect Dishonour upon even the whole worshipful Fraternity, in whose

* Grandidier is an example of how a non-Mason may err. It was he who first declared that Freemasonry was derived from operative masonry, in his essays on the Strassburg Cathedral, published in 1777. His unfounded conclusion was adopted by scores of other writers, and for many years shrouded the real history of our fraternity in an impenetrable fog, which has not altogether lifted to this day.

Favour several Acts had been both before and after that Period made."

The insistence that the Accepted Masons had no concern with trade regulations is significant, as we have already pointed out. So is the further intimation that "Geometry" and an understanding of "Architecture" were a distinctive possession of the Accepted Masons. Here we have, in my opinion, the principal explanation of the puzzling connection which we have noted between the Masons' Company and the secret Fraternity existing within its bosom.

The "Geometry" of Masonry.

I shall be very brief in my remarks on this point, as a fuller discussion would carry us too far away from the specific purpose of the present report.

The medieval churches were sermons written in stone, wood and glass. They were veritable books, as Emile Mâle has most convincingly proved in his remarkable work on "Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century." Victor Hugo, though he doubtless erred in some conclusions, has made the fact vivid and clear in that remarkable chapter in his "Notre Dame de Paris," which is headed "*Ceci tuera cela.*" ("This will kill That.")

Those who have read Victor Hugo's book will recall the scene where the archdeacon "threw open his cell window and pointed to the vast church of Notre-Dame, the dark outline of its towers, its stone walls, and its hip-roof silhouetted against the starry sky, and looking like a gigantic sphinx seated in the middle of the town." You will recall how "the archdeacon stood a while without speaking, contemplating the stupendous edifice," and how "then with a sigh he pointed with his right hand to the book lying on the table, and with his left to Notre-Dame, and, looking sorrowfully from one to the other, said: "*Alas! this will kill that*—ceci tuera cela." The printed book will kill the art of writing in stone—"printing will kill architecture."

Then Victor Hugo goes on to explain. Let me pick out for you a few sentences here and there, which may be helpful to our discussion:

"The human race has had two books, two registers, two testaments—architecture and printing, the Bible of stone and the Bible of paper. Up to the time of Gutenberg, architecture was the chief and universal mode of writing. In those days if a man was born a poet he turned architect. Genius scattered among the masses, kept down on all sides by feudality, escaped by way of architecture, and its Iliads took the form of cathedrals. From the moment that printing was discovered, architecture gradually lost its virility, declined and became denuded. Being no longer looked upon as the one all-embracing, sovereign and enslaving art, architecture lost its power of retaining others in its service. Carving became sculpture; imagery, painting; the canon, music. It was like the dismemberment of an empire on the death of its Alexander—each province making itself a Kingdom."

Victor Hugo's characterization of architecture is true to fact, particularly so far as the medieval age is concerned. Architecture during that period was virtually "the one all-embracing, sovereign, and enslaving art," commanding the services of all other arts.

Back of this architecture—inspiring, shaping, regulating it—was

the all-powerful Church. Arts and sciences, political and civil life, practically everything, was subject to the supreme rule of theology as defined by the doctors of the Roman Papacy. Individualism was submerged in and by the unity of the whole. Western Europe constituted one ecclesiastic solidarity, a brotherhood of men guided by the dogmas of the Mother Church. Community life, as a natural sequence, had its center in the church or cathedral. As all acts of civil life were profoundly penetrated by the religious spirit of the age, this social center opened its portals freely to every sort of coöperative undertaking. It served as a place of reunion for the townspeople; fairs were held there; discussions of grievances and plans for improvement were heard; gossip and news, accounts of other lands by returned travelers, and other matters of interest were unfolded; festivals, sacred and profane, were celebrated; the prices of labor and merchandise were regulated. Life turned around the church. No wonder, then, that the building of a cathedral was an event affecting everyone in town and claiming everybody's keenest interest.

A letter written by a French abbot to the Religious at Tutburg, England, in 1145, gives an idea of what profound concern the building of a church was to the whole community:

"Who has ever seen anything like this? Princes, powerful and rich men, nobles by birth, proud and beautiful women, bowed their necks under the yoke of chariots loaded with stones, wood, corn, wine, oil, and other materials needed for the building and the sustenance of the workmen. One could see as many as a thousand men and women in harness drawing the car, so heavy was the load it carried. Advance was slow and laborious. There was no boisterousness, no shouting. All labored in solemn silence, so great was the emotion filling their hearts, conscious they were helping to do the work of God."

C. B. of S.

The monastic orders, which occupied themselves with church building, often furnished the principal artisans from among their own numbers. The masons, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers, metal and ivory workers, painters, glaziers, decorators, together with a host of laborers, constituted a veritable craftsmen's city, under the rule of a "master architect," or principal conductor of the work. Usually a tent or frame structure was pitched against the rising walls of the building, which served as a "lodge," or headquarters. Here the principal artisans met to receive their orders, discuss technical difficulties, settle disciplinary matters, and unite in worship. The most important room of the lodge was that set aside for the master of the work; there he designed and gathered the models of the various portions of the edifice.

The families of the artisans lived in close vicinity to the church. An interesting side-light on conditions is obtained from a record made by Archbishop Léger, of Vienna, in 1050, telling how one of his faithful, a physician named Aton, interested himself in the improvement and beautifying of the "little houses" (*domnuncula*) occupied by the women employed in gold embroidery for vestments and other articles for divine service. A school for the children of the craftsmen's city often grew up in the shadow of the cathedral and developed in the course of time into

an important foundation. In short, the host of craftsmen, with their families, who were gathered together for the building of a church, formed a center of coöperation for divers industries and arts, laboring as a unit in the service of the Great Architect of the Universe.

The form and spirit of such a union was just what our "secret brotherhood" sought to cultivate. That explains, perhaps, why its members affiliated themselves with Masonic gilds and particularly the Masons' Company of London, considering, no doubt, the traditions of the descendants of the cathedral builders best suited for their own purposes.

However, there is a deeper and more clearly defined reason. It is suggested in the "geometry" of the Cathedral. Orientation, forms, grouping, position,—the building as a whole and every detail of it, were regulated by a fixed code of symbolism. Nothing was left to individual caprice. The cathedral, as we said before, was a book, the Bible of the humble. The Bishop decreed what it was to teach, the lessons it was to convey. Dogma, science, story, ethics were spelled out in characters and signs having specific meanings attached to them by the church authorities. The cathedral might represent a biography, catechism, church history, an essay on eternity, a martyrology, Bible story, combinations of divers subjects, an encyclopedia or a symphony; whatever it was, the same rules and conventions were followed. Accordingly, there was something impersonal about the product, much as about a modern newspaper. Artists and artisans take their law from the master of the work and they must submit to the dictates of the code, from one end of Europe to the other. Art was organized as dogma was organized, to the smallest detail.

The symbolism of the church services familiarized the faithful with the symbolism of the building, as Mâle has shown. When the printed book appeared and the recording of thought in buildings fell into disuse, symbolic art declined rapidly. Architecture became a thing of individual fancy. Cathedral symbolism would be beyond the power of the present age to interpret and at least three hundred years of the history of the human race would be largely unintelligible, if the sacred traditions had not been zealously guarded and transmitted from generation to generation by a secret brotherhood, composed chiefly of architects, sculptors, painters, musicians, poets and philosophers, who possessed the key to "geometry" and knew the grammar of symbolism. This brotherhood is the same we met with in Masons' Hall, at London, at Wiltshire and elsewhere.

The presence of students of the natural sciences in the lodges of the brotherhood is easily explained. Vincent de Beauvais's "Mirror of Nature" and the history of science in the medieval age were to be read best in the carvings on cathedral façades. Besides, the scientists were themselves attempting to build up a code of symbols for the service of the developing physics and chemistry. There were other reasons which we cannot discuss at this time.

I have purposely left unanswered all questions relating more directly to the beginning and development of the "symbolic" fraternity which, in England, met under the shelter of the Masonic craft guild, until the close of the seventeenth century. On the continent it had no such connections. The reason, already suggested, was that continental craft gilds were exclusively trade organizations.

I have also refrained from touching the problem of the origin of the symbology of the medieval church. This and other related matters cannot well be considered here.

I trust, however, that I have made it seem to you quite natural that, in London, the "symbolic" fraternity should have been identified, in some sort of way, with the Masons' Company, until the close of the seventeenth century. It probably is fairly clear to you also now why a portion of that fraternity should have become identified with the founding of the Royal Society "for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge," and why the later formed Grand Lodge of Accepted Free-Masons should in turn have drawn some of its most valuable members from that society.

Findings.

If you accept my findings, we shall agree:

(1) That Freemasonry, as we know it, is in nowise derived from operative Masonry.

(2) That a "symbolic" fraternity existed, whose members, under Anglo-Saxon conditions, frequently chose to obtain the freedom of the Masonic craft gild by "acceptance."

(3) That the explanation for the preference accorded to the Masonic gild may be inferred from the aspect of cathedral building in the medieval age, more especially the function of Masons, to give form to symbols of predetermined significance, the brotherhood striving to unite men of diverse interests and to preserve the "geometry" of sacred things.

(4) That on the European continent the brotherhood had not even an elbow-touch connection with craft gilds, the latter being exclusively trade organizations.

(5) That the history of the "Laws, Forms and Usages" of the Fraternity, while of less significance than that of "the Arts and Sciences thereof," nevertheless is of considerable interest, and serves to interpret much that could not otherwise be accounted for.

(6) That "Laws, Forms and Usages" are largely derived from association with Masonic craft gilds and form merely the outer shell or mold into which the substance was poured which developed into the kind of Freemasonry we know.

Fraternally submitted,

Ossian Lang,
Grand Historian.

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